

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy: Northeast Regional Action Plan



Resilient Landscapes



Fire-Adapted Communities



Responding to Wildfire

**A Phase III Report by the Northeast Regional Strategy
Committee**

REVIEW DRAFT

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy:

Northeast Regional Action Plan

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The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy: Northeast Regional Action Plan

(Review Draft - January 2013)

Executive Summary

[To be completed for final draft]

The regional options for addressing each goal are summarized as follows:

Goal 1: Restore & Maintain Landscapes	Goal 2: Fire-adapted Communities	Goal 3: Response to Wildfire
Regional Option 1A - Expand the use of prescribed fire as an integral tool to meet management objectives in the Northeast.	Regional Option 2A - Focus on promoting and supporting local adaptation activities to be taken by communities.	Regional Option 3A - Improve the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the wildland fire community.
Regional Option 1B – Increase the extent of fire dependent ecosystems and expand the use of fire as a disturbance process.	Regional Option 2B - Focus on directing hazardous fuel treatments to the wildland-urban interfaces.	Regional Option 3B - Increase the local response capacity for initial attack of wildfires.
Regional Option 1C - Focus on mitigating “event” fuels to reduce potential fire hazard.	Regional Option 2C - Focus on promoting and supporting prevention programs and activities.	Regional Option 3C - Further develop shared response capacity for extended attack and managing wildfire incidents with long duration fire potential.

Introduction

The Northeast Regional Action Plan details the goals, desired outcomes, investment options, outcome performance measures, and priority implementation tasks for the Northeast Cohesive Strategy Region. These actions, as identified by the Regional Strategy Committee, will enable the Northeast Region to make progress in achieving the overarching national goals: Restore and Maintain Landscapes, Fire-adapted Communities, and Fire Response.

The Three National Goals

Three goals were identified as the primary focus areas for the Cohesive Strategy. Flowing from the guiding principles and core values, and primary focus areas, three national goals were adopted in Phase I. The three national goals are:

- 1. Restore and Maintain Landscapes:** *Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.*
- 2. Fire-Adapted Communities:** *Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.*
- 3. Wildfire Response:** *All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.*

Success in achieving these three broad goals of the Cohesive Strategy is a long-term proposition – no single decision by policymakers or management actions by land managers will solve our Nation's complex the wildland fire issues. The strength and success of this Regional Action Plan will lie in its ability to motivate collaborative actions to reduce wildland fire risk by the diverse agencies, organizations, and partners involved in the wildland fire issue. The Northeast Regional Risk Analysis identified a set of feasible alternative investment options for addressing the Cohesive Strategy Goals in the Northeast U.S. For each of the investment options, the key risks, barriers, and opportunities were identified, and are addressed in this Regional Action Plan.

The implementation actions and tasks presented in this action plan are consistent with the guiding principles of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy which are:

- Reducing risk to firefighters and the public is the first priority in every fire management activity.
- Sound risk management is the foundation for all management activities.
- Actively manage the land to make it more resilient to disturbance, in accordance with management objectives.
- Improve and sustain both community and individual responsibilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from wildfire through capacity-building activities.
- Rigorous wildfire prevention programs are supported across all jurisdictions.
- Wildland fire, as an essential ecological process and natural change agent, may be incorporated into the planning process and wildfire response.
- Fire management decisions are based on the best available science, knowledge and experience, and used to evaluate risk versus gain.

- Local, state, tribal and federal agencies support one another with wildfire response, including engagement in collaborative planning and the decision-making processes that take into account all lands and recognize the interdependence and statutory responsibilities among jurisdictions.
- Where land and resource management objectives differ, prudent and safe actions must be taken through collaborative fire planning and suppression response to keep unwanted wildfires from spreading to adjacent jurisdictions.
- Safe aggressive initial attack is often the best suppression strategy to keep unwanted wildfires small and costs down.
- Fire management programs and activities are economically viable and commensurate with values to be protected, land and resource management objectives, and social and environmental quality considerations.

The Northeast Regional Action Plan also includes the identification of national outcome performance measures. The action plan identifies who will do what, where, and by when. The Regional Action Plan creates a mechanism for recording commitments the Northeast RSC has made, provides an immediate and tangible means to report regional successes to Congress and stakeholders, and ensures accountability in completing the actions. The implementation actions and tasks in the Northeast Regional Action Plan document the initial efforts in implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy at the regional, tribal, state, and local level in an effort to make an immediate and positive difference on-the-ground.

Regional Action Plan Considerations, Updates, and Revisions

This Action Plan identifies key actions which are necessary to implement the options. As a starting point, the Northeast Region has developed key actions under each option based upon feedback received from stakeholders during Phases I, II, and III of the planning process. The actions listed are key actions that are intended to be implemented during the next five years, and that will provide the most benefit to the region over that time period. The Action Plan will describe the scope of the actions, tasks associated with the actions, the lead and coordinating groups that will be implementing the actions, and the timeframe in which it is expected that the actions will take place.

It is recognized that further consideration and discussion of investment options developed as a result of the regional risk analysis will be necessary before emphasizing, adopting, and implementing any particular set of alternative regional strategies. Therefore, the Northeast Regional Action Plan will be limited to those actions and commitments that can be addressed now. Future discussion of the implementation of the investment options resulting from the national trade-off analysis may require the need to supplement or amend this Regional Action Plan. The planning process is an iterative one, with annual review and new input. It is likely that some of the suggested actions may be amended, dropped or deferred, while others may be added upon completion of the final Northeast Regional Action Plan.

Regional Context

This Northeast Regional Risk Analysis completed in November 2012 identified a set of feasible investment options for addressing the Cohesive Strategy Goals in the Northeast U.S. For each of the investment options, the key risks, barriers, and opportunities were identified, and are addressed in this Regional Action. These options represent alternative strategies that wildland fire management organizations, federal, state, and local governments, non-governmental organizations and local communities can adopt in any number and combination to best meet their objectives and address the risks they may face from potential wildfire impacts.

The options identify opportunities to focus wildland fire management activities tied to the Cohesive Strategy goals on important regional values including: fire fighter and public safety, cultural values, ecological values, marketable products, and property owner values. The risk analysis looked at wildland fire related challenges, and identifies opportunities within the region, at the county level where information exists. The options developed are not mutually exclusive. *There is no one preferred alternative to be applied across the Northeast region.* Instead the investment options should be balanced to achieve each of the national Cohesive Strategy goals and implement effective wildland fire management consistent with applicable land management objectives.

The wildland fire management community and those potentially affected by wildfire expressed their preference for investing in these options by Cohesive Strategy goal in the Northeast given the landscape conditions and available resources that currently exist. The actual mix of investments is dependent on many factors such as, but not limited to: local land management objectives, specific community needs, agency mission, potential risks, existing barriers, available skills, qualified personnel, budgets, equipment, and other resources. The approximate ranges of desired investment levels expressed by the Northeast Regional Strategy Committee and stakeholders for each Cohesive Strategy goal on an annual basis are:

Goal 1: Resilient Landscapes	30-35%
Goal 2: Fire-adapted Communities	20-25%
Goal 3: Wildfire Response	40-50%

There are some distinct differences in goal investment preferences with the Federal and Tribal agencies indicating a more balanced distribution among the three goals, approximately a third for each goal. Federal agencies indicate the highest percentage of investment in fuel treatment activities. The State agencies preferred substantially less investment in goal 1 and would invest more in goal 3 as they have greater (and often mandated) protection responsibilities. This is true especially for local fire departments and agencies as they are primarily responsible for protection of life and property. Due to the relatively large amounts of wildland-urban interface in the Northeast and the associated complexities and risks to life and property, a rapid, effective response to wildfire is often the most cost effective and lowest impact approach to dealing with current wildland fire management issues on the Northeast.

There is also a difference in preferred options for investing in the three Cohesive Strategy goals by geographic sub-region within the Northeast U.S. The investments are much more balanced among sub-regions than among agencies and organizations within each sub-region. There is a noticeable difference

between New England and New York and the Mid-Atlantic and Mid-West in goal 1 investments (fuel treatments activities). This may be due to less available and fragmented acreage to treat, seasonal variability of the “burning window”, and especially to a significantly higher population density limiting the feasibility of treatments due to proximity to urban areas and related health concerns to smoke from burning.

Regional Investment Options Summary

The following is the list of regional investment options that have been identified as the preferred Northeast regional feasible approaches to addressing the Cohesive Strategy goals in the Northeast:

COHESIVE STRATEGY GOAL 1: *Restore and Maintain Landscapes* – *Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.*

Regional Option 1A - Expand the use of prescribed fire as an integral tool to meet management objectives in the Northeast.

Regional Option 1B - Emphasize and actively manage to maintain, restore, and expand when possible, to increase the extent of fire dependent ecosystems and expand the use of fire as a disturbance process. Employ mechanical or other non-fire treatments to reduce risk before re-introducing fire to the ecosystem.

Regional Option 1C - Focus on mitigating “event” fuels through mechanical treatments and utilizing markets for biomass products to clean up and reduce the potential fire hazard from blowdowns, ice storms, and other forest damaging events.

COHESIVE STRATEGY GOAL 2: *Fire-adapted Communities* – *Human populations and infrastructure can survive a wildland fire. Communities can assess the level of wildfire risk to their communities and share responsibility for mitigating both the threat and the consequences.*

Regional Option 2A - Focus on promoting and supporting local adaptation activities to be taken by communities such as increasing capacity of volunteer fire departments (VFD), passing ordinances, developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP), joining Firewise, or other similar programs.

Regional Option 2B - Focus on directing hazardous fuel treatments to the wildland-urban interfaces (WUI). Treatments of WUI lands should provide a broader area of effective protection and reduced risk.

Regional Option 2C - Focus on promoting and supporting prevention programs and activities (targeting them toward reducing when and where fires occur)

COHESIVE STRATEGY GOAL 3: *Response to Wildfire* – *All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildland fire management decisions.*

Regional Option 3A - Improve the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the wildland fire community (pre-suppression and pre-planning; administration). Areas to address include:

- Development of Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) and Memorandum of Agreements (MOA)
- Standardizing and streamlining training
- Radio compatibility and interoperability
- Appropriate suppression and detection responsibilities regardless of landownership through agreements or contracts
- Sharing of personnel (co-funding or contracting)

Regional Option 3B - Increase the local response capacity for initial attack of wildfires

Areas to address include:

- Support rural Fire Departments to include wildland fire training, personal protective equipment (PPE), equipment, and risk reduction.
- Reduce redundant response and reallocate/increase resources to areas needing stronger initial attack.
- Use existing capacity more effectively such as authorities, finances, liability, qualifications, and agreements or MOUs.

Regional Option 3C - Further develop shared response capacity for extended attack and managing wildfire incidents with long duration fire potential. Focus areas include:

- Improve mobility of resources to respond to larger, longer fires; better utilize Compacts
- Additional resources can be used for initial response, but would not be primary initial response resources
- Remove administrative and fiscal barriers that limit use of resources during extended or long-duration fires

Regional Governance

The Northeast Regional Strategy Committee will continue to oversee, guide and coordinate implementation by all Cohesive Strategy partners. The Northeast Regional Strategy Committee is comprised of representatives from the following agencies and organizations (see appendix 7 for specific partner contact information):

- Department of the Interior
 - US Fish and Wildlife Service
 - US Geological Service
 - National Park Service
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Department of Agriculture
 - US Forest Service
- Fond du Lac Indian Reservation
- Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters (20 Northeast and Midwest States, and District of Columbia)
- The Nature Conservancy
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- National Association of Counties (NACO) (Lake Co., MN)

It is anticipated that in the near future, a permanent regional governance structure or entity will be established comprised of the leaders from the partners in the Cohesive Strategy, or their designated representatives to oversee the continued coordination, implementation, monitoring and accountability responsibilities committed to in the National Cohesive Strategy for the Northeast region.

Implementation Actions for Cohesive Strategy Goals

How the Northeast Regional Action Plan is organized: Under each national goal and regional option listed below are a set of actions, some having associated implementation tasks. Each of the actions and tasks will have a set of the following parameters completed that outline the details for implementing each action and task. These parameters are:

Regional Actions: Provides a description of each regional action. For each action listed, the following key components are addressed:

Scope: Regional, local, etc

Lead: Agency or organization

Other Collaborators: Agencies and/or organizations involved

Implementation Timeframe: *Short term (0-2 years); mid-term (2-4 years) or long-term (>4 years).*

Implementation Tasks: (optional – specific steps that may be needed to complete the action; not all actions will require implementation tasks)

Supplemental Information: Include any other information the region feels is important to the action, i.e., additional detail about the action, activity tracking

Overarching Actions – The following are Regional actions, some with national implications that apply to more than one of the Cohesive Strategy goals.

O1.0 - Form a Northeast Wildland Fire Leadership Council (NE WFLC)

Current Situation and Critical Success Factor: Currently in the Northeast Cohesive Strategy Region, there is no single entity in place that has the responsibility for governing and coordinating all the wildland fire management organizations, policy direction, and operational activities envisioned under the Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. There are thousands of organizations with some wildland fire management and response responsibilities at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels, including volunteer fire departments, and some non-governmental organizations. There are coordinating entities such as the EACG and the four Fire Compacts present in the Northeast whose primary responsibilities are related to response and training needs, but no single wildland fire management oversight or coordination entity exists that includes all aspects of the Cohesive Strategy goals. In order for the Cohesive Strategy to be successful, there must be active participation and coordination among all entities that are involved in delivering and affected by wildland fire management implementation activities in the Northeast.

Supplemental Information: *This action involves the formation of a wildland fire leadership governing body through a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to oversee, coordinate, and monitor the implementation of the Cohesive Strategy across the 20 states of the Northeast and Mid-west U.S.* The Northeast Regional Strategy Committee strongly recommends to the leaders of all the Northeast Cohesive Strategy participating entities, as well as the WFEC and WFLC nationally, that such an entity be formed under a memorandum of understanding/agreement to help insure a collaborative and coordinated approach to implementing the Cohesive Strategy as set forth in the Northeast Regional Action Plan.

This regional governing body will be comprised of all the current participating entities in the Cohesive Strategy. The Northeast Regional Action Plan will guide the MOU or MOA and provide the basis for developing a collective annual program of work, providing guidance for developing budgets, grant solicitations and proposals, and serve as the foundation for monitoring progress and insuring accountability for the implementation of the Northeast Cohesive Strategy Regional Action Plan.

Implementation Tasks:

- 1.1. RSC draft MOU by May 2013
- 1.2. RSC present draft MOU for review and approval to Regional leaders of federal (FS, FWS, NPS, BIA, FEMA, EPA) and tribal agencies, Northeastern Association of State Foresters (NAASF), National Association of Counties (NACO), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) regional leaders, regional non-governmental leaders i.e. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), etc) at State Fire Supervisors Meeting in June 2013.
- 1.3. Present proposed MOU for review and approval to Regional leaders of federal (FS, FWS, NPS, BIA, FEMA, EPA) and tribal agencies, Northeastern Association of State Foresters

(NAASF), National Association of Counties (NACO), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) regional leaders, regional non-governmental leaders i.e. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), etc. at NAASF meeting in July 2013.

Scope: All Northeast Cohesive Strategy partners

Lead(s): NAASF (For proposing action to Cohesive Strategy partners and developing the MOU)

Collaborators: Regional leaders of federal (FS, FWS, NPS, BIA, FEMA, EPA) and tribal agencies, Northeastern Association of State Foresters (NAASF), National Association of Counties (NACO), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) regional leaders, regional non-governmental leaders i.e. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), etc.)

Implementation Timeframe: Short-term - prepare and sign MOU or MOA by September 2013

O2.0 - Form a Northeast LANDFIRE Coordinating Group

Supplemental Information: This action involves the formation of a multi-jurisdictional LANDFIRE leadership body to oversee, coordinate, and monitor LANDFIRE products and processes which cover the 20 states of the Northeast and Mid-west U.S.

Current Situation and Critical Success Factor: LANDFIRE data is being used across ownerships and at national scales to depict many characteristics of ecological health, potential risks, condition of the land, and is being used nationally to make estimations of hazards and risks. For the Northeast, LANDFIRE data and the inaccuracies created at a national view are barriers to being able to make accurate assessments of conditions in the regions. Many Northeast state wildfire fire management agencies have weighed in on the need to improve the accuracy of LANDFIRE.

In the Northeast there is no single entity in place that has the responsibility for coordinating review, development, revision, updating, and collection of data that is used to develop LANDFIRE products. There are organizations with some review, revision, and management capability at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels. The fact that federal lands in the Northeast are not connected with each other and only in some areas are they connected to broader state level public lands only increases the complexity and time needed to have a coordinated review and updates, as FS and DOI are lead agencies for LANDFIRE. There have been efforts by federal agencies to identify and analyze localized problems, leading to some “fixes” at a regional scale, but the updates have been made largely based on the needs identified on federal lands. Errors identified on state jurisdiction and other federal jurisdictions have been noticed but there isn’t a collective body with the analysis skills and ability to dedicate the time to work with LANDFIRE to resolve errors. So as a consequence problems of fuel model calibration differences on map zone lines, non-burnable agricultural lands, and other inaccuracies remain in the products and data.

An example of the culmination of the problems is when the Fire Behavior Fuel Models (FBFMs) are used in the NE Fire Risk Assessment. This assessment is used to inform the State allocation

methodology for State core funding. Inaccurate data impacts the risk assessment results in an erroneous determination that directly affects funding allocation for fire suppression support.

In order for the Cohesive Strategy to be successful and have credibility among partners, there must be active participation and coordination among all entities who are involved in the use, revision, and development of LANDFIRE products for across boundary management, research, and projects in the Northeast.

Recommended Approach: The Northeast Regional Strategy Committee strongly recommends to the leaders of all the NE Cohesive Strategy participating entities that such an entity be formed under a memorandum of understanding/agreement to help insure a collaborative and coordinated representation between the NE fire management agencies and LANDFIRE. This coordinating group could be part of the interagency EACG or a stand-alone entity accountable to the CS governing body, such as the proposed NE WFLC in Overarching action #1.

This NE LANDFIRE group would be comprised of an analysis group who can represent the stakeholders of the NE including states, tribes and federal agencies as well as other non-governmental land management organizations (i.e. TNC). The NE Regional Action Plan would provide the basis for developing a collective annual program of work, and serve as the foundation for monitoring progress and insuring accountability for the implementation of the NE Cohesive Strategy Regional Action Plan.

Scope: National; Includes all NE Cohesive Strategy partners

Lead(s): LANDFIRE Business Unit (For proposing action to CS partners and developing the MOU)

Collaborators: LANDFIRE business leads (FS, DOI), Regional ecology or fire leaders of federal (FS, FWS, NPS, BIA, FEMA, EPA) and tribal agencies, NE state foresters, NE state fire supervisors, regional non-governmental leaders (i.e. TNC, etc)

Implementation Timeframe: prepare and sign MOU/MOA by end of CY2013

- 1.1. Annual Data call for LANDFIRE update and rigorous analysis to identify problem areas, and prioritize the need for correction

Scope: National and Regional analyst group

Lead(s): FS, DOI, Regional Points of contact, (FMI)

Collaborators: LANDFIRE technical specialists/analysts (FS, DOI), Regional ecology or fire specialists of federal (FS, FWS, NPS, BIA, FEMA, EPA) and tribal agencies, NE state fire specialists/planners, regional non-governmental leaders (i.e. TNC, etc), Fire Science Consortia

Implementation Timeframe: End of CY2014, in time for next update

03.0 - The Northeast states should integrate applicable actions from this NE Cohesive Strategy Action Plan into future revisions of their individual state's forest action plan.

Supplemental Information: By their very nature, state Forest Action Plans (FAP) are meant to include all partners and consider all land ownerships. The Cohesive Strategy needs to be integrated into the FAP's, particularly since federal cooperative grants must include a tie to a state's FAP in order to receive funding for all programs including those supporting wildland fire management activities.

Scope: All Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners

Lead(s): States

Collaborators: Regional leaders of federal (FS, FWS, NPS, BIA, FEMA, EPA) and tribal agencies, Northeastern Association of State Foresters (NAASF), National Association of Counties (NACO), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) regional leaders, regional non-governmental leaders i.e. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), etc.)

Implementation Timeframe: next revision of a state's FAP - short, mid or long term

04.0 - Assist local communities with implementing the Cohesive Strategy. Provide resources to support local government officials, such as fire chiefs, in the integration of Cohesive Strategy into their communities and operations - such as the development of the IAFC's Leaders Guide for Cohesive Strategy.

Scope: All Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners

Lead(s): IAFC

Collaborators: All Cohesive Strategy partners

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

05.0 - Improve wildland fire reporting. Streamline and coordinate all wildland fire reporting procedures and systems to improve reporting accuracy for more effective decision-making and resource allocation.

Supplemental Information: The view of most RSC partners is that the national reporting systems such as NFIRS and NFPORS have become too complex, burdensome, time consuming for most wildland fire entities to maintain to expected standards current entry. The result is that critical data is being lost or is inadequate for effective use by leaders and managers. There is a need for coordination at the national level to better integrate and simplify data entry to make it easier for local fire departments and others to provide important data needed for making effective policy and resource allocation decisions.

Scope: National

Lead(s): Federal agencies (i.e. DOI, FS, USFA)

Collaborators: All Cohesive Strategy partners

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

06.0 – Set up communications infrastructure to inform and educate the public and relevant policy makers on the role of wildland fire on the landscape, and to mobilize people for action. This action includes the implementation of a “Fire Guard Program” and a learning network.

Supplemental information: Research has found (McCafferty and Olsen, 2012) that the public has a fairly sophisticated understanding of fire’s ecological role and the environmental factors that can increase fire risk. The public obtains information on fire from a wide variety of sources, but findings consistently show that interactive information sources are both generally preferred and more effective than unidirectional sources. As a way to improve ecosystem health and reduce fire risk, active land management generally has greater citizen support than a no-action alternative. Most respondents accept the practice of prescribed fire for active forest management and tolerate the accompanying smoke; in contrast, smoke is a highly salient issue for households with health concerns. The public tends to see mitigating the fire risk as a shared responsibility with landowners, whether public or private, responsible for taking appropriate action on their own property.

Wildland fire management, including fuels treatments, can have significant benefits to tourism officials and stakeholders, utility providers (e.g., watershed managers, utility line maintenance), transportation planners, insurance industry, not to mention the public at large through prevention of both smaller human-caused fires, especially in the WUI, as well as larger wildfires. These benefits must be communicated.

The western US has a well-developed strategy on public involvement and Western Region Cohesive Strategy Action Plan that includes:

1. Establish and Promote a “Fire Guard” Program

- Create a network of cross-trained crews for on-call response to fire emergencies, prescribed fire opportunities, and on-going fuels reduction activities.
- Develop policy and agreements that make a local “fire guard” both possible and desirable.
- Describe the concept in enough detail to create pilot projects. Include:
 - Training and certification of local groups in prescribed fire and wildland fire response.
 - Review and revise contracting and agreement structures which currently inhibit building local capacity, including payment to organized local “on call” crews for fuels reduction, prescribed fire, and wildland fire response.
 - Develop mechanisms and agreements to mutually accept/recognize and/or standardize appropriate certifications across state, federal, tribal, and local land and fire management organizations.
 - Develop and maintain local capacities through identification of collaborative partner roles, responsibilities, and set-aside actions in agreements that are incorporated by reference in socio-economic NEPA analyses.
 - Create an agreement framework for set-asides, supplemental actions, and mobilization processes in local area operating plans (In 5 to 10 year plans with a process for annual supplemental addendum).

- Create pilot projects in at least three adjacent counties in one or more states, including a tribal area.
- In non-pilot areas, use the above identified mechanisms to begin building capacity, as requested by local FAC collaboratives and local organizations.

2. Establish and Maintain Learning Networks

- Expand The Nature Conservancy (TNC) hub and spoke FAC network
- Collaboratively fund workshops and peer learning opportunities
- Increase support for the work of the FAC coalition and the increased effective use of Firewise USA; Ready, Set, Go!, CWPPs, and the tools thereof to achieve outcomes.
- Develop support (release time, performance measures, budget) for state and agency personnel to provide technical support and work with integrated fire management collaboratives at the county, tribal territory, and/or community level.
- Enlist the participation of Social Science research and researchers in the adaptive management of this system, to move from shared learning to action.
- Facilitate an information collection and dissemination system from pre-planning through outcomes and adaptation in an open source approach.
- Provide feedback loop from local to national level at the project to CS revision scales.

Scope: National

Lead(s): USFS Fire-adapted Communities Program

Collaborators: Other collaborators: NFPA, DOI, FAC Coalition, NACO, NFPA Firewise, Firesafe Councils, State and County Foresters, local, state and federal fire, Forest Service Research Stations, fire and land management agencies, NGOs, community practitioners, tribes, WFEC/WFLC, FEMA, NRCS, Society of American Foresters, NASF, stakeholders in the transportation, utility, water management, tourism and insurance sectors.

Implementation Timeframe: short-term, mid-term and long-term

Implementation Actions for the Regional Options

COHESIVE STRATEGY GOAL 1: Restore and Maintain Landscapes – *Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.*

National Outcome Performance Measure:

- Risk to landscapes is diminished.

National Output Metrics: TBD

Regional Option 1A - *Expand the use of prescribed fire as an integral tool to meet management objectives in the Northeast.*

Option Description - In the past when and where a burn would take place was solely the decision of the owner or manager (NASF Prescribed Fire Survey 2012). Native Americans once burned for conditions that improved berry production, fireproofed living areas, and improved hunting success. Present landowners in the Northeast region have similar interests and objectives for their land including wildlife habitat, recreation and tourism, tax interests, aesthetics, and ecosystem health and sustainability. Stakeholder input has indicated that prescribed burning is used to meet a wide range of objectives, and that under many scenarios burning actually accomplishes more than the primary objective. For example, prescribed fire is a compatible tool used to meet fuels reduction objectives. There are state and private lands that also require intervals of burning to create or maintain the desired conditions. Many of the federal land management units, such as national forests, wildlife refuges, and national parks have plans that specify prescribed burning to meet their goals and objectives. Landowner objectives associated with, but not limited to, wildlife habitat, silviculture, threatened and endangered species habitat, ecosystem restoration, control or eradication of non-native invasive plants can be met with using prescribed fire or a combination of methods including fire for creating and maintaining the desired conditions.

As outlined in the Northeast Regional Risk Analysis Report (November 2012), there are a number of barriers, critical success factors, and challenges to achieving this option. The following actions and implementation tasks have been developed by the Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners to address and overcome these issues and concerns.

Regional Actions for Option 1A:

- 1. Develop and adopt prioritized prescribed burning strategies** - Adopt a prioritized implementation and coordination strategy among partners through which prescribed burning needs can be met, and opportunities maximized.

Scope: Sub-regional or multi-state, state-wide

Lead: NE RSC, EACG

Other Collaborators: All partners

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: Priority setting among local organizations and agencies could partially resolve availability and capacity issues, such as the conflict between using the same workforce for burning and wildfire response. Opportunities can be maximized, and costs reduced when resources are combined gaining efficiencies and cost effectiveness. Success would be measured in terms of trends in coordination and collaborative efforts.

2. Increase the number of prescribed burning qualified people including contractors, private citizens and landowners.

Scope: Regional

Lead: NE RSC and EACG

Other Collaborators: Compacts, agencies, EA Training working team

Implementation Timeframe: long-term

Supplemental Information: To increase prescribed burning in the Region, the number of trained people to plan and implement controlled burning needs to increase.

Implementation Task:

a) Increase prescribed burning and smoke management training opportunities

Scope: Local

Lead: Prescribed Fire Councils

Collaborators: Compacts, fire academies, state agencies, federal agencies (All partners with a role in prescribed fire management)

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: Training opportunities include both formal classroom training and practical field training. Both will need to be more frequent to build an available burning workforce. The focus could be businesses and potential contractors, organizations and volunteer fire departments. Private citizens and landowners would likely get practical field experience through state and NGO programs and as opportunities allowed. Smoke management and best management practices will be an important component of training.

3. Adopt liability laws for prescribed burners (similar to existing state laws in Florida).

Scope: State

Lead: State agencies that manage fuels and prescribed burning, prescribed fire councils

Collaborators: All partners with a role in prescribed fire management

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

4. Increase the number of prescribed fire councils. Increase the number of prescribed fire councils to assist public and private burners, and provide a communication and coordination network among burners statewide.

Scope: States that need, but do not have established prescribed fire councils

Lead: State agencies or other organizations that manage fuels and prescribed burning

Collaborators: All partners with a role in prescribed fire management

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: Prescribed fire councils have been successful in supporting and actively resolving issues in states like getting burner certification programs started, liability legislation for certified burners, and training. To date, the New Hampshire Prescribed Fire Council, which consists of 13 partners, has been successful in establishing State-wide prescribed fire qualification and training standards as well as a standardized template for prescribed burn plans. Ideally a prescribed fire council would be identified for each state in the Region. Depending on need, a council could be formed for more than one state.

5. Increase prescribed burning on private land by:

Implementation Tasks:

a) Integrating fuels reduction, defensible space principles, and controlled burning to achieve management objectives within private land management programs.

Scope: National, Regional, Sub-regional and local

Lead: WUI and fire prevention coordinators

Collaborators: Private land management assistance program leads, adjacent public land agencies, Landowners, fire protection leads

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: Much of the rural private land in the Northeast is not associated with a community or development, so may not be included in CWPP type planning efforts, Firewise communities or Fire-adapted Communities (FAC). Yet the rural private land is included in wildfire risk assessments done at local or state scales. Fuel reduction including burning should be considered in management activities under private land management programs in areas identified as having risk from wildfire. This task also supports Goal 2 actions to reduce wildfire threats.

b) Including prescribed fire in federal land management assistance programs. Ensure that federal incentive and assistance programs include prescribed burning as a management tool and provide professional level assistance related to prescribed fire planning and implementation.

Scope: National, Regional/State level (NRCS works at state and county and multi county levels)

Lead: USDA, DOI

Collaborators: federal assistance program leads

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental information: There are many federal land management assistance programs and incentives for private landowners to achieve a variety of owner objectives. To increase the use of prescribed burning advice and assistance needs to consider burning as a viable tool, and provide the necessary assistance and support including funding to use burning to achieve objectives. There is also desire to ensure program coordination in development of criteria, and actions that are not in conflict with each other.

c) Expanding current program incentives for landowners (e.g., tax credits, free disposal of material, and increase use of finance or cost-share authorities).

Scope: National, Regional

Lead: NE RSC, especially NASF, NRCS, USFS, DOI

Collaborators: State DNR divisions (Private landowner assistance program leads etc.), local NRCS; national forests, national wildlife refuges, national parks; tribes

Implementation Timeframe: short-term - focus in those areas where programs are being implemented

d) Ensuring that all prescribed burners are trained in best smoke management practices.

Scope: Regional

Lead: Smoke management experts (state, federal, tribal, EPA) – initiated by NE RSC

Collaborators: Prescribed fire councils

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: Smoke is one of the items identified in the NASF Prescribed Fire survey (2012) as a barrier to using more controlled burning in the Region. Smoke best management practices need to be part of training, widely distributed to current burners, and included as part of the professional assistance within private land management programs.

6. Increase prescribed burning in landscapes farther away from heavily populated areas.

Implementation Tasks:

- a) Identify areas for prescribed fire opportunities.** Identify areas where multiple conservation partners are either currently use prescribed fire or desire to use fire (public or private), assess and prioritize opportunities for using more prescribed fire.

Scope: Regional, State

Lead: NE RSC

Collaborators: All partners with a role in prescribed fire management

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: The action addresses one of the barriers to burning; air quality and smoke. The availability of larger contiguous landscapes where prescribed fire is authorized occur in more remote sectors of the region, and generally involve public land management units. To expand prescribed burning can partially mean to increase acres burned, which can in turn be interpreted in some areas to burning larger areas.

State Action Plans and similar plans, land management plans, or conservation plans may have many of these areas identified. This action could incorporate priority areas for protecting federal and state threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitat and invasive plants (and other objectives) through the use of controlled burning. Private lands adjacent to public lands should also be considered within the larger landscape.

- b) Ensure agreements allow for across boundary fuels reduction and prescribed burning.**

Scope: State level

Lead: US Forest Service, Northeastern Area, NAASF

Collaborators: State fire agencies, national forests

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental information: The Good Neighbor agreements in some western states are an example where hazard fuels and restoration activities including prescribed burning can be implemented by either party where lands are intermingled. Project plans are developed and decisions made which describe activities and desired outcomes. For the NE Region the Master Cooperative All-Hazard & Fire Agreement may provide a similar framework to engage across boundary restoration, fuels reduction, and prescribed burning. These agreements should be developed in each state.

c) Organize and fund mobile prescribed burning crews/modules.

Scope: Regional, sub-regional

Lead: EACG, NE RSC

Collaborators: federal agencies, tribes, TNC, state agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental information: This action partially addresses the capacity issue when not enough resources are available for burning. In the South, many out-of-region resources are mobilized to conduct burning on federal lands. TNC burning crews are another example of mobile workforce. Wildfire Management Modules are another organized and trained group to plan, implement and monitor prescribed burns.

7. Increase prescribed fire outreach and education efforts. Create opportunities for increased levels of prescribed fire outreach and education that can be tailored to local conditions using public and privately managed areas.

Implementation Tasks:

a) Share and disseminate science and monitoring results with others. This supports adaptive learning or learning from others mistakes and successes. Utilize partner websites and newsletters.

Scope: Regional

Lead: US Forest Service, TNC, (initiated by NE RSC)

Collaborators: All Cohesive Strategy partners

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

b) Create self-guided or hosted wildland fire management demonstration areas in a variety of ecosystems and geographic locations to display the various management objectives and outcomes where they are lacking. For example, advertise prescribed burning demonstrations that are open to visitors.

Scope: Regional to local

Lead: States, Prescribed Fire Councils, TNC

Collaborators: All partners involved in prescribed fire management activities

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

c) Utilize, support, and expand The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Fire Learning Networks (FLN) for education and fire use.

Scope: Sub Regional or ecological breaks

Lead: TNC

Collaborators: All partners involved in prescribed fire management activities

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: Currently there are 2 FLNs that cover a small amount of the Northeast Region, and one in development (MI). Part of the mission of the FLN is peer learning and learning exchanges to overcome barriers to sustainable and integrated ecological, economic and social solutions.

- d) Develop a marketing campaign about the benefits of managed wildland fire.** This campaign should be tailored to the public's values for open spaces, as a learning platform for educating and increasing tolerance or acceptance for using fire to conserve and preserve what they value (i.e. wildlife species, plant diversity, open looking woodlands and forests, etc.)

Scope: Regional, Sub-regional

Lead: Federal and State Forestry and public affairs agencies

Collaborators: state, federal, and county public land managers and fire agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: See examples like Visitmyforest.org where more information and links are provided of examples of desirable and unwanted fires.

- e) Support the formation of a fire science consortium in New England.**

Scope: sub-regional, New England

Lead: Federal and state agencies

Collaborators: Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP,) US Forest Service Northern Research Station, interested universities, all wildland fire management organizations

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Regional Option 1B - *Emphasize and actively manage to maintain, restore, and expand when possible, to increase the extent of fire dependent ecosystems and expand the use of fire as a disturbance process. Employ mechanical or other non-fire treatments to reduce risk before re-introducing fire to the ecosystem.*

Option Description - Wildland fire has played a key role in shaping the ecosystems of the Northeast. Both lightning caused and human ignited fires once burned across landscapes creating a mosaic of conditions and habitats. Land uses, values, and fire suppression have changed the distribution, function, and sustainability of fire-adapted systems. Some ecosystems that depend on fire, such as prairies were converted for mostly agricultural purposes, while other fire-maintained ecosystems converted to more closed-canopied forests. Expanding development such as residential housing and commercial developments also increases costs for treatments and limits managers' ability to use beneficial fire on the land as a management tool. Smoke from prescribed burning or from wildfire can have negative impacts on public health and safety, which can restrict using fire to restore ecosystem health.

In the last decade we have seen the development of large-scale collaborative planning and implementation efforts such as the Fire Learning Network and the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act that emphasize fire-adapted ecosystems. While there are eastern landscapes participating in these initiatives, Option 1B aims to elevate these approaches for the Northeast bearing in mind the fragmentation and smaller ownerships of the region. Ecosystems cross all political and ownership boundaries and it follows that ecosystem-based restoration efforts will be successful through collaboration and partnerships that emphasize inclusiveness. Option 1B aims to encourage cross-boundary restoration work through increased collaboration, communication and cooperation. Furthermore, Option 1 B recognizes that restoration in the NE, a relatively densely populated area, must consider and communicate benefits to people in terms that are important to those populations.

Overarching Principles for Option 1B include:

- Restore and maintain function of fire-adapted communities within Historic Range of Variability (HRV) of structure and composition to the extent possible.
- The role of fire needs to be acknowledged within all fire-dependent ecosystems but may need to be modified based on local conditions, issues, and tolerances.
- Efficiencies and effectiveness are sought throughout collaboration and coordination in planning, implementation and monitoring.

As outlined in the Northeast Regional Risk Analysis Report (November 2012), there are a number of barriers, critical success factors, and challenges to achieving this option. The following actions and implementation tasks have been developed by the Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners to address and overcome these issues and concerns.

Regional Actions for Option 1B:

1. Develop collaborative partnerships to facilitate ecosystem-based, multi-jurisdictional planning and implementation.

Scope: Sub-regional, multi-state

Lead: NE RSC, TNC or some other organization that is not one of the large landowners within the partnership

Collaborators: All landowners, land managers, economic cooperators (forest products industry, grazers, etc.), policy makers

Implementation time frame: long-term

Supplemental Information: The vision of these collaborative partnerships is that they are applied conservation science partnerships with two main functions. The first is to provide the science and technical expertise needed to support conservation planning at landscape scales – beyond the reach or resources of any one organization. The second function is to promote collaboration among their members in defining shared conservation goals and focus on promoting the benefits of restoring fire-dependent ecosystems to people, property, and landscapes. With these functions in mind, partners can identify where and how they will take action, within their own authorities and organizational priorities, to best contribute to the larger conservation effort. The partnership does not place limits on partners; rather, they help partners to see how their activities can "fit" with those of other partners to achieve a bigger and more lasting impact.

Planning and implementing management actions on the landscape scale will almost certainly require crossing jurisdictional boundaries. There must be multi-jurisdictional coordination to make the process truly cohesive, inclusive, and strategically effective. An important element of success for this action is to include a diversity of fire and non-fire management partners because restoration and maintenance of fire-adapted ecosystems involves a wide array of resources and has many benefits.

Successes in conservation partnering include the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), USDA Forest Service's Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, and TNC's Fire Learning Networks which utilize and leverage existing planning efforts and collaborative opportunities. Additionally, the State Forest Action plans and other plans may already have some of the frameworks in place.

2. Focus fire-adapted ecosystem efforts to identify and collaborate on public and conservation areas such as state natural areas, research natural areas, special interest areas, wilderness areas, or other largely intact fire-adapted ecosystems managed for this purpose.

Implementation Task:

a) Identify focal areas to serve as opportunities for expansion of fire-adapted ecosystems.

Scope: State, multi-state

Lead: Land managers and prescribed fire planners within each state (multi-state in New England)

Collaborators: owners of those properties and their partners

Implementation Timeframe: planning short-term; projects will be opportunistic.

3. Increase private landowner participation in landscape scale projects.

Scope: Regional

Lead: USFS (NA)

Collaborators: NRCS, States, TNC

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental information: Private landowner assistance programs, such as the NA Forest Stewardship Program, NRCS conservation programs, as well as state level landowner programs would be the mechanisms to raise awareness of and offer advice and funding opportunities to engage private landowners in larger landscape scale projects and conservation areas. Current participants could be invited into developing or ongoing projects.

4. Identify opportunities to manage natural ignitions for resource benefits.

Scope: Federal and state public lands

Lead: States leads for natural area management

Collaborators: federal agencies, tribes, state fire supervisors

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: There may be more opportunities to assess and define the role natural ignitions can play to meet land management objectives in some areas. It is recognized there are many variables to consider and prescriptive guidance must be developed.

5. Develop restoration guidance to address wildland urban interface (WUI) fire issues within fire-adapted ecosystems.

Scope: Local

Lead: States, local

Collaborators: state level WUI coordinators, fire ecologists, land management agencies,

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental information: WUI will always be a focus, so local choices for specific burns or other management actions provide room for that decision. Ecosystem composition and structure can be used strategically to reduce threats to communities, developments, homes, private land, and infrastructure. For example openings may be used adjacent to developments where they can be mowed periodically yet provide ecosystem value when viewed within the larger landscape.

Regional Option 1C - *Focus on mitigating “event” fuels through mechanical treatments and utilizing markets for biomass products to clean up and reduce the potential fire hazard from blowdowns, ice storms, and other forest damaging events.*

Option Description - Most fuel hazards arise from natural events. Wind, ice, disease and insects can create large areas of very high fuel loading in forested areas. All ecosystems can experience short and long term altered fire behavior characteristics if event fuels are left untreated. Removal of event fuels is more crucial when the proximity to homes and other infrastructure could lead to significant economic loss if a wildfire occurs. Event fuels may also represent an economic opportunity to supply forest product needs ranging from biomass to higher valued products.

As outlined in the Northeast Regional Risk Analysis Report (November 2012), there are a number of barriers, critical success factors, and challenges to achieving this option. The following actions and implementation tasks have been developed by the Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners to address and overcome these issues and concerns.

Regional Actions for Option 1C:

- 1. Develop multi-jurisdictional fuel hazard response plans** to effectively coordinate efforts to address event created hazardous fuels across ownerships.

Supplemental Information: Common principles that would be incorporated into fuel hazard response plans include:

- Fuels are removed in spatial patterns that meet objectives for mitigating intense fire potential;
- Defensible zones are created in the WUI or around other values at risk are included in mitigation efforts; efforts include private lands; and
- The affected local communities’ economic sustainability is considered.

Implementation Tasks:

- a) Identify existing authorities and barriers at all jurisdictional levels to developing response plans.**

Scope: Regional

Lead: States

Collaborators: All CS partners with land management responsibilities

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: Many authorities exist for federal and state agencies to expedite planning and treatment of event created fuels. Additional education and awareness of these authorities, and how and when to use them, is needed for responding to events.

- b) Assess regional landscape and identify priority areas for treatment.**

Scope: Region, state, local

Lead: Interagency team of federal/state incentive program leads, foresters, forest industry, state and local policy makers (initiated by NE RSC)

Collaborators: Landowners

Implementation Timeframe: short-term - with periodic review and input as technology or uses for event fuels emerge.

c) Identify current risk areas for pre-wildfire planning and response operations.

Scope: state, local

Lead: Interagency team of federal/state incentive program leads, foresters, forest industry, state and local policy makers

Collaborators: Landowners

Implementation Timeframe: short-term - with periodic review and input as technology or uses for event fuels emerge.

2. Increase the use of program incentives for communities and private landowners to reduce the hazards from event fuels.

Supplemental Information: These incentives exist associated with programs sponsored by the federal and state agencies, and other foundations/organizations (AFF). Some examples include the Forest Stewardship Program, and the Forest Land Enhancement Program. Coordination among state and federal agencies to improve assistance and incentives for landowners is needed to help mitigate event fuels.

Implementation Tasks:

a) Conduct a more complete assessment of available forest landowner assistance programs and how to best apply these programs to address event fuel mitigation needs.

Scope: state, local

Lead: Interagency team of federal/state incentive program leads, foresters, forest industry, state and local policy makers (initiated by NE RSC)

Collaborators: Landowners

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

b) Promote the awareness of forest landowner assistance programs and incentives to private landowners and remove barriers to expedite their delivery.

Scope: Regional

Lead: State and federal agencies

Collaborators: forest products industry, collaborative networks/partnerships

Implementation Timeframe: Short-term

c) Ensure landowner access to professional assistance before and immediately following fuel creating events, including but not limited to forest/land management advice, economic assistance, and post event psychological assistance for homeowners.

Scope: State, local

Lead: State Foresters

Collaborators: Federal agencies, forestry consultants, collaborative networks/partnerships

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

COHESIVE STRATEGY GOAL 2: Fire-adapted Communities – *Human populations and infrastructure can survive a wildland fire. Communities can assess the level of wildfire risk to their communities and share responsibility for mitigating both the threat and the consequences.*

National Outcome Performance Measures:

- Risk of wildfire impacts to communities is diminished.
- Individuals and communities accept and act upon their responsibility to prepare their properties for wildfire.
- Jurisdictions assess level of risk and establish roles and responsibilities for mitigating both the threat and the consequences of wildfire.
- Effectiveness of mitigation activities is monitored, collected and shared.

National Output Metrics: TBD

Regional Option 2A - *Focus on promoting and supporting local adaptation activities to be taken by communities such as increasing capacity of volunteer fire departments (VFD), passing ordinances, developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP), joining Firewise, or other similar programs.*

Option Description - This goal and investment option focuses on creating fire-adapted communities that protect homes and infrastructure by promoting fire resistance within those communities. Becoming a fire-adapted community reduces the chance of life, property, and natural resource losses through wildfires as well as the resulting economic and emotional stress on a community. Creating fire-adapted communities is an investment of relatively few dollars that can be effective in preventing large losses due to structure fires, increase public awareness of wildfires, reduce fire ignitions, make wildfires easier to extinguish, and reduce resource losses.

As outlined in the Northeast Regional Risk Analysis Report (November 2012), there are a number of barriers, critical success factors, and challenges to achieving this option. The following actions and implementation tasks have been developed by the Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners to address and overcome these issues and concerns.

Regional Actions for Option 2A:

- 1. Develop and maintain a state level list or map of all communities designated as being at-risk from wildland fire.** In states where a risk assessment has already been completed, the assessment should be used to prioritize community planning, education, and fuels reduction efforts and be updated when new information becomes available.

Scope: State

Lead: State agencies (NAASF)

Collaborators: Other agencies within the state conducting the assessment

Implementation Timeframe: short-term; continuous

2. Provide targeted information on the benefits of becoming a Fire-adapted Community (FAC) to local governments (village, city, town, and county).

Scope: State, Local

Lead: State and federal fire prevention and WUI specialists

Collaborators: Fire departments, local govt., homeowner associations, land managers

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

Supplemental Information: Information could be provided by public and private organizations, and could include homeowner associations, volunteer fire departments, and other public service organizations. Promoting Firewise Communities, Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP), and Ready-Set-Go will help advance the FAC initiative.

3. Develop codes and standards for establishing and maintaining Fire-adapted Communities reflecting regional and local wildland fire risks to communities, including landscape and structure components and related issues.

Scope: National, state, or local

Lead: State or local government unit

Collaborators: State and federal fire prevention and WUI Specialists, fire departments

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Implementation Tasks:

a) Work through Non-governmental organizations (NGO) at the national level to develop a list of best practices and model zoning laws and development standards.

Scope: National

Lead: Federal agencies

Collaborators: Regions, NGOs that include: the American Planners Association, builders associations, the National Association of Counties (NACO), League of Cities, Mayors Conference and other organizations.

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

b) Explore the creation or revision of state or local level open burning regulations.

Scope: State and local

Lead: State

Collaborators: local communities and fire departments

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

c) Work with the insurance industry on products that motivate homeowners to create fire-adapted homes and communities. Create a model fire-adapted community concept that can be replicated in high fire prone areas resulting in reduced fees and higher ISO ratings.

Scope: National

Lead: Federal agencies

Collaborators: States, insurance industry, NFPA, IAFC, and others

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

4. Increase the capacity of our partners to assist or provide leadership in the Fire-adapted Communities initiative.

Scope: National, state

Lead: National

Collaborators: States, local government, fire departments, homeowner associations

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

5. **Continue to explore and expand use of federal grant programs**, (e.g. National Fire Plan, FEMA pre-disaster mitigation program, Volunteer Fire Assistance) to support community planning, hazardous fuels reduction education and outreach activities.

Supplemental Information: Successful grant programs initiated during the National Fire Plan facilitated assistance for communities at risk of wildfire in the Wildland Urban Interface. For example, the Rural Fire Assistance program provided funding for Fire Departments that protect rural, wildland-urban interface communities that played a substantial cooperative role in the protection of federal lands.

Implementation Tasks:

- a) **Assign or designate a grant writing coordinator to work as liaison between Federal, State and Local governments** to research, write and facilitate grant opportunities earmarked for disaster prevention and preparation.

Scope: National/State

Lead: USDA Forest Service

Collaborators: Regional

Implementation Timeframe: Long-term

- b) **Establish a federal incentive program to reimburse for the creation of FAC** through hazardous fuels reduction on private property, involvement in Firewise Communities USA, creating CWPPs, and other comprehensive community planning practices.

Scope: National/State

Lead: USDA Forest Service

Collaborators: Forest Service

Implementation Timeframe: Long-term

- c) **Work with Congress and Federal agencies to tie fuels reduction incentive programs related to development** (e.g., community development grants) to be scored higher for programs that incorporate prevention programs into their State and local government development requirements.

Scope: National

Lead: Federal agencies

Collaborators: Regional/State agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: Explore existing grant and funding opportunities. For example, FEMA pre-disaster mitigation programs could be enhanced to maximize fuels reduction across landscapes, emphasizing private lands. Federal grant information is available on www.grants.gov.

6. **Make Volunteer Fire Assistance funds available to increase fire department involvement in FAC initiatives.**

Scope: National

Lead: Federal agencies (USFS, DOI, FEMA)

Collaborators: Regional/State agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: The DOI Rural Fire Assistance program (2001-2005) is an example of a successful program allowing grants to neighboring community fire departments to enhance local wildfire protection, purchase equipment and train volunteer firefighters specifically for wildland fire. Demonstrated success, as illustrated in the RFA program, could be emulated or reinstated in future planning efforts.

7. **Develop a common system to characterize and rate Fire-adapted Communities (FAC);** track individual community progress; prioritize investment; and facilitate the identification of trends across communities.

Scope: National/State

Lead: Fire-adapted Communities Coalition (USFS, NFPA, IAFC, NASF, IBHS and others)

Collaborators: NWCG, Regional Strategy Committee Chairs, state fire agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: Considerations for characteristics of a FAC include existence of recognized Firewise Communities and Community Wildfire Protection Plan(s), involvement in Ready-Set-Go, enactment of a mitigation/fire prevention ordinance, and/or implementation of a hazardous fuels reduction/mitigation project.

Regional Option 2B - Focus on directing hazardous fuel treatments to the wildland-urban interfaces (WUI). Treatments of WUI lands should provide a broader area of effective protection and reduced risk.

Option Description - The wildland-urban interface (WUI) is the area where houses meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland vegetation. This makes the WUI a focal area for human-environment conflicts such as wildland fires, habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and biodiversity decline. This option focuses on the challenge to reduce wildfire risk and to increase the protection of the forests, homes and communities within the wildland urban interface from the threat of wildland fire in the Northeast Region.

Approximately 40% of the U.S. population lives within the 20 northeastern states. Of that percentage, one third of the population lives within wildland urban interface areas. Projections for the Northeast Region include increasing population along with expanding urbanization, and increasing forest conversion and fragmentation. Most fires in the Northeast U.S. are started by humans and immediately place homes and property at risk.

Currently, the lack of fire on the landscape has created two primary issues in the Northeast. These issues in the Northeast can be described in risk management terms as: 1 – a low public perception of wildfire risk due to a low occurrence of large fires, but having a high risk to life, property and infrastructure if or when they escape initial attack, and 2 – the Northeast has an extensive area of wildland-urban interface conditions. A spatial analysis of land cover and census block data performed by Radeloff *et al* (2005), found the eastern USA contains the greatest extent of WUI in the 48 contiguous states.

The risk of wildfire increases as a result of natural events. Wind, ice, disease and insects can create large areas of downed timber and increased fuels (vegetation), leading to exacerbated wildfire conditions. All ecosystems can experience short and long-term wildfire hazards if these conditions remain in place. Removal of residual effects from natural events is more urgent with the current and expected population growth in forested areas.

A proactive, collaborative approach to identifying risks in the WUI combined with developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, reducing hazardous fuels, treating event fuels and educating the public in the context of managing fuels across a multi-jurisdictional, fragmented landscape is necessary to manage the wildfire risk encountered throughout the Northeast Region.

Regional Actions for Option 2B:

1. **Increase fuels management on public and private land** to mitigate undesired fire effects, reduce the probability of fire damage and property loss, and reduce wildfire suppression costs.

Scope: National/State

Lead: Fire-adapted Communities Coalition (USFS, NFPA, IAFC, NASF, IBHS and others)

Collaborators: NWCG, Regional Strategy Committee Chairs, state fire agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: Support community needs to accomplish fuels management through financial incentives and education and training opportunities that teach land managers

about appropriate treatment options. Provide them with Best Management Practices information when it becomes available.

2. Use Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) to identify and influence fuel treatment areas in and around the Wildland-Urban-Interface.

Scope: Federal, state, and local

Lead: State

Collaborators: Multiple local level collaborators depending on ownership and jurisdictions.

Implementation Timeframe: short-term; continuous

Supplemental Information: Lands surrounding CWPPs provide a tremendous opportunity to influence where and how fuel reduction projects funds may be distributed. Among those benefits is the opportunity to establish a localized definition and boundary for the wildland-urban interface at risk. In addition to giving communities the flexibility to define their own WUI, CWPPs also assist federal agencies in providing specific consideration to fuel reduction projects that implement CWPPs. CWPPs help influence increased private land management assistance to complement and implement broader fuel reduction management objectives across fire-prone landscapes; and encourage the implementation of the mitigation strategies identified in CWPPs.

3. Provide incentives for local land managers to conduct education programs familiarizing neighboring communities of the positive benefits of hazardous fuels reduction treatments. These include benefits to the ecosystem, local economy, and public health and safety. Knowledge about specific fuel treatments positively influence support for fuels reduction treatments.

Scope: Local community level

Lead: Federal, state, and county land managers

Collaborators: Grant opportunity providers

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

4. Provide hazardous fuel reduction assistance to communities and counties. State and federal WUI coordinators or specialists who are trained, understand the needs, can assist and coordinate in design and implementation of fuels reduction, and are linked with sources of available funding such as grants.

Scope: Region and state, depending on locations of federal WUI coordinators

Lead: State and federal fire prevention and WUI coordinators, depending on which state and how much federal presence is available to assist at local levels.

Collaborators: communities and counties; all affected jurisdictions and owners

Implementation Timeframe: short-term in locations with WUI coordinators and established WUI programs, long-term - elsewhere

5. Promote the development of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOU) that ease jurisdictional barriers for efficient and effective treatment and maintenance of fuel treated areas (for example, neighborhood agreements).

Scope: Regional, State, local

Lead: States

Collaborators: State, local, NFPA, IAFC, non-profit partners

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

6. **Evaluate the effectiveness of various fuels reduction and modification techniques** and create recommendations (e.g. Best Management Practices) for implementation. Support research that examines the effectiveness of various treatment options (for example, the degree and longevity of treatment, firebreak width recommendations, and success stories).

Scope: national, regional

Lead: Joint Fire Science Program, Regional USFS

Collaborators: USFS, state fire agencies, NPS, BIA

Implementation Timeframe: short-term; mid-term: full implementation in 4 years

Regional Option 2C - Focus on promoting and supporting prevention programs and activities (targeting them toward reducing when and where fires occur).

Option Description - The Northeast Region as defined for the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, encompasses 20 Midwestern and Northeastern States and the District of Columbia. The 20 States comprise the most densely populated region of the nation, home for more than 41 percent of Americans. The vast majority of the land is in private ownership, and while wildfires occur year round, spikes occur in the spring and fall. Episodes of ignitions during dry periods can saturate the landscape and overwhelm the capacity of local fire organizations.

Many wildland fires can be fast moving but are often contained within a single burning period (one day). Although not all fires are reported, available data shows nearly 184,208 fires burning approximately 611,210 acres during the 10- year period 2000-2009. Most wildfires are human caused. Accidental fires and arson are the primary causes of fires in the Region.

Seasonal and extended drought conditions often create wildfire hazards in the Northeast. Seasonal drought is anticipated on shallow and more coarsely textured soils, and is highly predictable. Prolonged droughts also occur and can affect a localized area or multiple states.

Homes and infrastructure are involved in a high percentage of wildfires in the Region. Due to the heavy population and large proportion of landscape in the WUI/intermix even the small wildfires threaten at least one and usually many structures which increases risk and complexity for fire fighters. *Preventing unwanted fires and increasing homeowner shared responsibility will reduce firefighter risk and decrease need for firefighting response.*

As outlined in the Northeast Regional Risk Analysis Report (November 2012), there are a number of barriers, critical success factors, and challenges to achieving this option. The following actions and implementation tasks have been developed by the Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners to address and overcome these issues and concerns.

Regional Actions for Option 2C:

- 1. Use fire reporting data to identify concentrated occurrences of arson and accidental human caused wildfires.** This information can help direct prevention activities to the most needed areas at the most appropriate times of year.

Scope: State and local

Lead: State and federal fire prevention and WUI specialists

Collaborators: Media, state and federal agencies, fire departments, homeowner associations

Implementation Timeframe: short-term; continuous

- 2. Develop a common regional communication strategy to help reduce unwanted human ignitions in and near communities.**

Scope: State

Lead: State agencies (DNR, USFS, NPS, USFWS, BIA)

Collaborators: Regional

Implementation Timeframe: short-term; continuous

Supplemental Information: Communication planning includes the identification of an overarching goal for a particular situation, supporting objectives, and key messages. Tactics are described along with their target audience, timeline, and budget. Including an evaluation component is helpful in determining which tactics are most effective at reaching audiences and preventing wildfires.

3. **Institute fire investigation and coordination standard operating procedures** between law enforcement and firefighting personnel in the event of human-caused fires.

Implementation Tasks:

- a) Provide the NWCG course, FI-110, Wildland Fire Observations and Origin Scene Protection for First Responders. Offer the advanced course, FI-210, Origin and Cause Determination to achieve Qualifications. Offer incentives for Qualified Fire Investigators.
- b) Consider creating an investigation coordinator position to act as a liaison between law enforcement and firefighting personnel.

Scope: Region, state, local

Lead: State Foresters, IAFC, NFPA, Federal agencies

Collaborators: Fire Departments, Firefighters, Law Enforcement Officers and other first responders.

Implementation Timeframe: short-term; continuous

Supplemental Information: Accurately identifying fire cause trends is critical to the success of a fire prevention program. In cases that involve negligent acts the responsible party may be pursued for recovery of suppression costs and property damages. In cases involving arson or other criminal acts, identifying and apprehending the perpetrator is of vital public interest.

4. **Develop or expand a common wildland fire risk awareness communications toolbox.**

Scope: National, State, local

Lead: Fire-adapted Communities Coalition (USFS, NFPA, IAFC, NASF, IBHS and others)

Collaborators: Communities and counties

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: A communications toolbox could be an invaluable resource for fire prevention specialists, WUI coordinators, educators and others. The toolbox would provide an opportunity to share examples of education and outreach strategies, lessons learned, and success stories that highlight effective communication strategies. An option is to create a toolbox that functions in 'real time' which would include information on wildfire events, alerts on fire behavior, and red flag warnings as they are occurring.

5. **Communicate local fire danger and coordinate the implementation of consistent fire restrictions between the local enforcement authorities.**

Scope: Local

Lead: State and local

Collaborators: sheriff's offices, volunteer fire departments, and local authority having jurisdiction (i.e. city, town, village), federal partners and land managers.

Implementation Timeframe: long-term

COHESIVE STRATEGY GOAL 3: Response to Fire – All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildland fire management decisions.

National Outcome Performance Measures:

- Injuries and loss of life to the public and firefighters are diminished.
- Response to shared-jurisdiction wildfire is efficient and effective.
- Pre-fire multi-jurisdictional planning occurs.

National Output Metrics: TBD

Regional Option 3A - Improve the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the wildland fire community (pre-suppression and pre-planning; administration). Areas to address include:

- Development of Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) and Memorandum of Agreements (MOA)
- Standardizing and streamlining training
- Radio compatibility and interoperability
- Appropriate suppression and detection responsibilities regardless of landownership through agreements or contracts
- Sharing of personnel (co-funding or contracting)

Option Description - Success of the Cohesive Strategy and of this option depends on addressing the following barriers and critical success factors:

“Investment in firefighting workforce - Need to invest in human capital at the field level. Budget cuts are reducing the number and quality of the on-the-ground firefighting workforce. Budget cuts always seem to land at the field more than at the national level.

Continued and increased investment in the firefighting workforce is necessary in order to maintain capacity to respond to wildfire, mitigate fire hazards, and restore/maintain landscapes. A lack of investment in the firefighting workforce will lead to fewer firefighters on the ground, reduced safety, reduced capability at accomplishing local projects, and reduced initial attack success. In the long term we face a generation gap in the fire workforce available for future leadership of the program.”

Impacts from a lack of adequate investment affect all agencies and organizations with wildland fire responsibilities – local, state and federal. There is a need to develop a wildland fire management program that focuses efforts on maintaining and developing field level leaders and workforce.

As outlined in the Northeast Regional Risk Analysis Report (November 2012), there are a number of barriers, critical success factors, and challenges to achieving this option. The following actions and implementation tasks have been developed by the Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners to address and overcome these issues and concerns.

Regional Actions for Option 3A:

- 1. Expand NWCG membership** - All stakeholders with wildland fire responsibilities should be represented by either NWCG or another entity that represents all interests. The current charter for NWCG requires national wildland fire management responsibilities. Re-examine the membership of the NWCG Executive Board to ensure state and local government is adequately represented.
Scope: National
Lead: NWCG Working Team
Collaborators: EACG Working Team and some states
Implementation Timeframe: short-term – to initiate action, mid-term completion
- 2. Increase support for Compacts** - The Northeast Region is well organized sub-regionally with four forest fire compacts that cover all 20 states and portions of Canada – they need to be supported and enhanced through training, incident assignment opportunities, and funding.
Scope: National
Lead: USFS, NASF
Collaborators: Federal Agencies, State wildland fire protection agencies
Implementation Timeframe: short-term and continuous
Supplemental Information: Federal agencies are often part of each compact organization as associate members or ad hoc participants. Where federal cooperators are not continuously engaged, efforts need to be made so that routine engagement is the norm. Compacts have greatly increased available resources for fire management in the Northeast Region by increasing initial response capacity via training of state and local firefighters and by providing coordination, regular training and academies.
- 3. Strengthen role of the EACG** - Maintain and enhance the role of the Eastern Area Coordinating Group (EACG) and its Working Teams.
Scope: Regional
Lead: EACG Chair
Collaborators: all EACG representatives
Implementation Timeframe: short-term
Supplemental Information: This can be attained through Executive Leadership commitment (such as from the proposed NE WFLC) to the EACG mission, and the consequent commitment and engagement of their regional staff.
- 4. Eliminate resource sharing policy barriers** - Work at the local level to identify policy barriers that prevent the effective sharing of wildland fire management resources.
Scope: National GACC, Compacts and States
Lead: EACG IBWT
Collaborators: all EACG members
Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: For federal agencies, the EACG IBWT meets yearly and as needed through the year to meet objectives. They can identify barriers and recommend solutions to the NMAC. Issues for states and compacts include liability, authorities to hire and pay firefighters, qualifications systems and training, and interagency use of compact IMT members from Canada on federal fires.

5. **Improve radio compatibility** - Resolve and simplify radio frequency use authorization and licensing processes for all agencies (local, state, federal and tribal); this issue needs recognition and action at the national level.

Scope: National

Lead: National Radio Interoperability Work Group

Collaborators: Mostly USFS and DOI communications representatives.

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

6. **Improve pre-planning for wildfire response** - Ensure that wildfire response reflects the Cohesive wildland fire management strategy by:

Implementation Tasks:

- a) **Developing pre-fire plans** that consider integrating wildland fire use with prescribed fire or mechanical treatments, where appropriate.

Scope: Local fire agencies

Lead: Local fire agencies

Collaborators: Entities that carry out prescribed fire or hazard mitigation strategies

Implementation Timeframe: mid term

- b) **Consider applicable land management objectives in pre-fire plans** when deciding on appropriateness of suppression strategy and tactics.

Scope: Regional

Lead: Federal agencies & states

Collaborators: Fire managers, landowners, and fire scientists

Implementation Timeframe: long term

Supplemental Information: Considering private landowner values when responding to fires on private lands or in mixed ownership. Formulate pre-fire plans that identify specific needs such as archeological areas, sensitive cultural sites, environmentally sensitive areas such as eagle's nests, preservation areas and landowner management plans.

7. **Improve organizational efficiency and wildfire response effectiveness**

Scope: Region and states

Lead: NE RSC

Collaborators: Entities with fire protection responsibilities

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: Some approaches to implementing this action include:

- Addressing preparedness strategically for greater efficiency and cost effectiveness through better coordination and planning by multiple jurisdictions for primary protection responsibility (For example: states protecting federal land and federal agencies protecting state land in some areas)

- Developing a flexible and mobile response capacity, given changing fire seasons and fuel events.
- Conducting cost benefit/efficiency analyses to determine best level of protection on smaller or low wildfire occurrence land ownerships.
- Using cooperating or reciprocal agreements/contracting/offsets or other instruments to provide the most cost effective protection.
- Coordinating wildfire detection and response (i.e. interagency dispatch).
- Improving wildfire prediction capabilities at the state and local level.
- Coordinating fire danger ratings between agencies within a local area.
- Utilizing technology and predictive tools to improve fire response.

- 8. Improve cost share and grant programs to leverage resources.** Support local fire response organizations through programs like Ready Reserve, Volunteer Fire Assistance, and excess property programs and federal grants.

Scope: National, Region and state

Lead: WO, NA S&PF, R-9

Collaborators: Region, state, local

Implementation Timeframe: long-term

- 9. Improve and maintain access infrastructure** (airports, roads and bridges, etc.) that affect wildfire response to appropriate emergency response standards.

Implementation Tasks:

- a) Identify and coordinate appropriate agencies** that have jurisdiction over this infrastructure (remove obstacles, provide letters of support).

Scope: Regional

Lead: States

Collaborators: Counties, local communities

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term to long-term

- b) Provide guidance to communities regarding emergency access needs** and for a process to identify sub-standard access concerns.

Scope: Regional

Lead: States, NE RSC

Collaborators: Counties, local communities

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term to long-term

- 10. Address capacity issues related to all-hazard response.**

Implementation Task:

- a) Improve efficiencies with Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC)** group coordination and prioritization between wildfire and all-hazard issues by collaborating with the all hazard lead agencies such as FEMA, EMAs, and Homeland Security.

Scope: Regional

Lead: EACG

Collaborators: all wildland fire management agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

11. Streamline and enhance the interagency qualifications system for wildfire and all hazard incidents to include cross training, crosswalk qualifications and use of life experiences.

Scope: National

Lead: NWCG, DHS

Collaborators: all emergency response agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

12. Modify federal and state legislation relating to wildfire and all hazard incident response in order to:

- Clarify and enhance authorities
- Facilitate initial payment for movement of resources
- Simplify financial exchanges between agencies
- Minimize liability exposure when sharing resources

Scope: National

Lead: NASF

Collaborators: NWCG, NASF

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Regional Option 3B - Increase the local response capacity for initial attack of wildfires. Areas to address include:

- Support rural Fire Departments to include wildland fire training, personal protective equipment (PPE), equipment, and risk reduction.
- Reduce redundant response and reallocate/increase resources to areas needing stronger initial attack.
- Use existing capacity more effectively such as authorities, finances, liability, qualifications, and agreements or MOUs.

Option Description - The Northeast Region has unique challenges in wildland fire management, particularly in initial attack response. Landownership in the Northeast is overwhelmingly in private ownership, with less than 10% being publicly owned by federal, state or local governments. The majority of land is protected by local fire departments, not large land-management agencies. These rural fire departments may or may not have wildland fire training and adequate equipment. Additionally, where public and tribal lands do occur, land ownership is highly fragmented, resulting in many jurisdictions being responsible for initial and long term fire suppression response. Many of these jurisdictions go long periods without experiencing a significant wildland fire, even though they experience a high number of ignitions. These ignitions typically create the most damage within the first burning period, so often obtaining resources from outside the jurisdiction are not feasible. Maintaining or building capacity, particularly at the local level, is critical to the successful suppression of fires in the Northeast. Local fire departments play a key role in initial attack success in the Northeast. The better equipped and trained they are, the better chance the fire will be brought under control quickly and safely, thereby reducing the need and associated costs for state and federal support for a larger fire.

As outlined in the Northeast Regional Risk Analysis Report (November 2012), there are a number of barriers, critical success factors, and challenges to achieving this option. The following actions and implementation tasks have been developed by the Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners to address and overcome these issues and concerns.

Regional Actions for Option 3B:

1. **Assess needs for initial attack capability** - Within the Northeast region, there is a need to look closely at those areas that have greater initial attack demands to make sure that sufficient resources are available. An assessment is needed to determine how and where to best re-allocate or increase investments to provide adequate initial attack capacity to communities at greatest risk to wildfire.

Scope: State, Region

Lead: NE RSC

Collaborators: Federal, Region, States

Implementation Timeframe: short-term

2. **Ensure firefighters are properly prepared** - Maintain a fire fighter workforce that is prepared mentally and physically. Ensure that training and performance standards are met by adopting and supporting firefighter fitness programs (e.g. FireFit) to help reduce accidents and fatalities resulting from personal health issues.

Scope: Regional, state

Lead: Federal agencies, states

Collaborators: All NE wildland fire agencies (federal, state, tribal, local)

Implementation Timeframe: short-term; continuous

Implementation Tasks:

- a) **Increase participation of local fire departments in wildfire response** - Support local fire departments as integral to the suppression of wildfires across the Northeast, by assisting in providing quality training, proper equipment and protective gear, and increased funding where needed.

Scope: NA S&PF, States

Lead: USFS State and Private Forestry, States,

Collaborators: All state, federal and grant recipients

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

- b) **Improve the safety and capacity of local fire departments** to respond to wildfires through increased firefighter training, providing adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and using NWCG certified training to meet applicable regional or state standards.

Scope: USFS State and Private Forestry, States,

Lead: USFS State and Private Forestry

Collaborators: All state, federal and grant recipients

Implementation Timeframe: short-term - Form team and educate VFDs; mid-term - fully operational.

Supplemental Information: Rural and Volunteer Fire Departments have been, and are continually in receipt of many fire grant funds from state and federal entities. This action would establish an interagency team to assist and audit rural FDs and VFDs for resource and training needs, efficiency in applying and meeting standards, and appropriateness of funds use.

3. **Increase opportunities for fire fighters to attain IMT qualifications** - Develop a work plan to include planned experience opportunities for Incident Management Team (IMT) development and for qualification currency of established federal, compact, and state IMTs.

Scope: National

Lead: NWCG

Collaborators: NWCG

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term; continuous

4. **Streamline and simplify the qualifications system for interagency firefighters** to include credit for life experiences, relaxing the timeframes for currency through assignments, and be more flexible in accepting of agency standards.

Scope: National

Lead: NWCG

Collaborators: NWCG, all agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

5. **Resolve authorities and legislative issues for sharing resources** to include local hiring and exporting of firefighters, financial payment authorities, liability issues, export and import authority, and agreements. Address authority issues via federal legislation, for the USFS to mobilize state and local resources via the Master Cooperative Wildfire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement, or implement a work around.
Scope: National
Lead: NASF, USFS
Collaborators: NASF and NWCG
Implementation Timeframe: mid-term
6. **Establish an interagency dispatching system** that can be used by all wildland fire entities and jurisdictions consistent with local standards, decision-making, and needs. Facilitate formation of a reimbursable fund or payment mechanism for resource mobilizations among the states and federal agencies.
Scope: National
Lead: NWCG
Collaborators: NWCG agencies
Implementation Timeframe: mid-term
7. **Increase wildfire response efficiency** - Establish a regional policy for all Northeast wildland fire management and response entities that consistently promotes the use of the closest appropriate wildfire response unit(s) to improve efficiency, sharing of resources, allocation of resources, and cost effectiveness.
Scope: State, Regional, local
Lead: NE RSC, IAFC, NACO
Collaborators: All NE wildland fire agencies (federal, state, tribal, local)
Implementation Timeframe: mid-term
Supplemental Information: Addressing this action would include developing model MOUs and MOAs for use by states and local jurisdictions to help ensure consistency.

Regional Option 3C - Further develop shared response capacity for extended attack and managing wildfire incidents with long duration fire potential. Focus areas include:

- Improve mobility of resources to respond to larger, longer fires; better utilize Compacts
- Additional resources can be used for initial response, but would not be primary initial response resources
- Remove administrative and fiscal barriers that limit use of resources during extended or long-duration fires

Option Description - Sharing resources is standard operating procedure in the Northeast Region. It is an efficient and effective means of managing incidents while minimizing costs. Reductions in fire program budgets and fire staff, as well as the multi-jurisdictional nature of most incidents, have required an ongoing interagency response to incidents. Although the frequency of large incidents has been at historical lows over the last decade, the size of incidents is overshadowed by smaller very complex incidents and/or numerous incidents compressed into a short timeframe. These situations require the sharing of resources on a continual basis. In addition to the local sharing of resources among local, state and federal agencies within a state, the Northeast Region has well established forest fire compacts that are utilized to share resources among the states and provinces. These governmental entities work well to coordinate and dispatch resources over a broad geographic area, and enhance resource sharing for efficient and effective response.

As outlined in the Northeast Regional Risk Analysis Report (November 2012), there are a number of barriers, critical success factors, and challenges to achieving this option. The following actions and implementation tasks have been developed by the Northeast Regional Cohesive Strategy partners to address and overcome these issues and concerns.

Regional Actions for Option 3C:

1. **Streamline the national qualifications process** - Mobilizing firefighters and Incident Management Team members to other geographic areas for campaign fires is one of the few ways that NWCG qualifications can be acquired and maintained. A more structured and effective national training and experience plan needs to be developed, and implemented, in order for the Northeast Region to be able to more effectively acquire and maintain resources that meet the national standards.

Scope: National

Lead: National (DOI, FS, NWCG, NASF)

Collaborators: Regions, States, Compacts

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

2. **Increase the use of Compacts and mutual aid agreements for sharing qualified fire fighter resources** - No single agency can afford to train and staff an adequate number of wildland firefighters to meet its needs during above average years. The most efficient way to achieve proper staffing is to rely on mutual aid from adjoining jurisdictions and cooperators. A more cost effective

way to provide wildland fire management is needed to build partnerships, increase the use of Compact authorities, and establish mutual aid organizations and agreements.

Scope: Regional, States

Lead: NE RSC Compacts, States

Collaborators: All regional wildland fire management agencies

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

3. Improve the accuracy of wildfire reporting in the Northeast at the local, state, tribal and federal levels by:

- Communicating the need and importance of fire incident occurrence reporting (i.e. completing 209 reports).
- Ensure that all fire reporting entities using the same databases such as NFIRS and NFPORS, and by following the same data entry protocols.
- Improving the accuracy of cause determination through training
- Working with VFD through state liaisons to get reporting done as a condition of continued grant funding.

Scope: Regional

Lead: NE RSC, USFS NA S&PF

Collaborators: All agencies and VFDs

Implementation Timeframe: mid-term

Supplemental Information: The importance of reporting, especially fire incident occurrence reporting, is critical for maintaining fire fighter situational awareness and helping managers make better wildland fire management decisions in the NE region.

Monitoring and Accountability

Monitoring of progress and accountability for accomplishment of the actions in this plan is critical to the success of the Northeast Cohesive Strategy Action Plan. Monitoring provides an essential feedback loop that is the basis for continuous improvement. Monitoring also includes the opportunity to identify and incorporate new accomplishment data and scientific information as it becomes available.

A regular process of reporting performance measure and activity accomplishments maintains a regular focus on the three Cohesive Strategy goals, communicates progress nationally, with the other Cohesive Strategy Regions, and among the Northeast Cohesive Strategy partners and stakeholders, and provides an opportunity to make course adjustments as work progresses.

“The broad societal goals represented in this Cohesive Strategy Action Plan do not simply happen; they are a result of accomplishing many actions, activities, policies, investments, and priorities. It is important to track actions and activities as they lead to intermediate outcomes and eventually long-term outcomes desired from the Cohesive Strategy.

While the national outcome performance measures are designed to measure broad outcomes, they may not be sufficient to manage the actions and activities that necessarily precede the desired outcomes, therefore there is a need to both periodically assess outcomes and track and monitor activities. Outcome performance measures represent an approach to accountability that demonstrates how desired outcomes change through time so that decision-makers can reconsider policies and actions routinely.

National output metrics are measures of activities carried out through programs, projects, and collaborative agreements that implement planned actions or tasks and result in desired changes in the landscape, delivery of programs, and short term progress in meeting wildland fire management objectives consistent with the three Cohesive Strategy goals.

The Northeast RSC recommends the following actions be adopted by the Cohesive Strategy partner organizations and permanent Northeast RSC governing body to help insure accountability for implementation of the Cohesive Strategy:

WHY MEASURE PERFORMANCE?

Management guru Tom Peters says:

- ✓ If you don't measure results, you can't tell success from failure.
- ✓ If you can't see success, you can't reward it.
- ✓ If you can't reward success, you're probably rewarding failure.
- ✓ If you can't see success, you can't learn from it.
- ✓ If you can't recognize failure, you can't correct it.
- ✓ If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.

Monitoring and Accountability Actions

A. Develop and implement a monitoring plan to provide comprehensive annual feedback on the effects of implementing actions and tasks.

Scope: Regional Level

Lead: Regional RSC

Collaborators: Federal, State, Tribal, local agencies and organizations

Implementation Timeline: short-term

B. Participate in the development and reporting to a national web-based action plan performance measure and activity reporting system designed to facilitate information gathering and exchange in support of Cohesive Strategy decision-making.

Scope: National Level

Lead: National Wildland Fire Leadership Council

Collaborators: Regional RSCs

Implementation Timeline: Short-term

C. Meet quarterly to discuss Action Plan progress and effectiveness. Recommend Action Plan changes as needed.

Scope: Regional level

Lead: Northeast Wildland Fire Leadership Council

Collaborators: Regional Cohesive Strategy partners

Implementation Timeline: Quarterly

D. Report to the national Cohesive Strategy leadership (WFLC, WFEC) on progress and needed adjustments as work progresses.

Scope: National

Lead: Regional RSC or Northeast Wildland Fire Leadership Council

Collaborators: Regional Cohesive Strategy partners

Implementation Timeline: Annually

E. Review analysis of monitoring results and promptly adjust plans and/or reconvene groups to maximize the effectiveness—and minimize the adverse effects—of Action Plan implementation.

Scope: National

Lead:

Collaborators: National, State, Tribal, local

Implementation Timeline: Annually

Regional Communication Strategy *(Region's strategy for continuing to outreach with and receive feedback from stakeholders, communicating success stories and results. etc.)*

TBD

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- Northeast Regional Strategy Committee Coordinator:
 - Larry Mastic, Consultant, USFS (retired)
- Northeast Regional Strategy Committee Strategic/Technical Group Leader:
 - Terry Gallagher, USFS R9, Fuels Specialist
- Northeast Regional Strategy Committee Communications Group Leader:
 - Maureen Brooks, USFS, NA S&PF, Community Fire Planner/Specialist

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary

Abiotic – In biology, abiotic components are non-living chemical and physical factors in the environment.

Barriers - Policy or administrative impediments that must be removed in order for the Cohesive Strategy to be successful.

Biotic - Of, relating to, or resulting from living things, esp. in their ecological relations

Critical Success Factors - Policies, programs, agreements, partnerships, resources, and other factors that must be present for the Cohesive Strategy to be successful.

Fire-adapted community - Human communities consisting of informed and prepared citizens collaboratively planning and taking action to safely co-exist with wildland fire.

Fire-adapted ecosystem - An ecosystem is “an interacting natural system, including all the component organisms, together with the abiotic environment and processes affecting them.” (NWCG Glossary). A fire-adapted ecosystem is one that collectively has the ability to survive or regenerate (including natural successional processes) in an environment in which fire is a natural process.

Fire community - A term that collectively refers to all those who are engaged in any aspect of wildland fire-related activities.

Fire exclusion - The land management activity of keeping vegetation or ecosystems from burning in a wildland fire.

Fire management community - A subset of the fire community that is has a role and responsibility for managing wildland fires and their effects on the environment.

Fire science community - A subset of the fire community consisting of those who study, analyze, communicate, or educate others on the components of fire management that can be measured, such as fire behavior, fire effects, fire economics, and other related fire science disciplines.

Resilient - Generally referred to in this document as “resilient ecosystems,” which are those that resist damage and recover quickly from disturbances (such as wildland fires) and human activities.

Regime - A fire regime is the pattern, frequency and intensity of wildland fire that prevails in an area.

Risk - A situation involving exposure to danger; the possibility that something unpleasant or unwelcome will happen.

Stakeholder - A person or group of people who has an interest and involvement in the process and outcome of a land management, fire management, or policy decision.

Appendix 2: Acronyms

CWPP – Community Wildfire Protection Plan
DOD - Department of Defense
EACG – Eastern Area Coordinating Group
FAC – Fire-adapted Community
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
FEPP - Federal Excess Personal Property
FFP - Fire Fighter Property
FLN – Fire Learning Network
FWS – US Fish and Wildlife Service
GACC – Geographic Area Coordination Center
IAFC – International Association of Fire Chiefs
IBWT -
IMT -- Incident Management Team
JFSP – Joint Fire Science Program
MAC – Multi-Agency Coordination
MNICS – Minnesota Incident Command System
MOA – Memorandum of Agreement
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
NASF – National Association of State Foresters
NEMAC – National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (UNC Asheville)
NE RSC – Northeast Regional Strategy Committee
NIFC – National Interagency Fire Center
NFPA – National Fire Protection Association
NGO – non-governmental organization
NPS – National Park Service
NSAT – National Science and Analysis Team (for Cohesive Strategy)
NWCG – National Wildfire Coordinating Group
PPE – personal protective equipment
RFA – Rural Fire Assistance (DOI program)
RSC – Regional Strategy Committee
WG- Working Group
TNC – The Nature Conservancy
USFS – US Forest Service
VFA - Volunteer Fire Assistance
VFD – volunteer fire department
WFEC – Wildland Fire Executive Council
WFLC – Wildland Fire Leadership Council
WUI – wildland urban interface

Appendix 3: References

McCaffrey, S.; Olsen, C., 2012. Research Perspectives on the Public and Fire Management: A Synthesis of Current Social Science on Eight Essential Questions, Gen. Tech. Rep. NRS-104. Newtown Square, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Research Station, 39p.

National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: Phase I, March 2011

National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy: Northeast Regional Assessment. Phase II, September 2011.

National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy: Northeast Regional Analysis. Phase III, November 2012.

Appendix 4: Communications Activities and Plans

TBD

Appendix 5: Stakeholder Outreach and Feedback

TBD

Appendix 6: Links to Phase I and II Reports, Success Stories, and Other Key Documents

Forest and Rangelands website, www.forestandrangelands.gov

Northeast Regional Strategy Committee website, <http://sites.nemac.org/northeastcohesivefire/>

Fire-adapted Communities, www.fireadapted.org

United States Fire Administration, www.usfa.fema.gov

Firewise Communities, www.firewise.org

Appendix 7: Regional Committee and Working Group Membership

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Appendix 8: Deferred Regional Actions

TBD